

## Supermarkets reject irradiation

**Public pressure is keeping irradiated foods off the supermarket shelves**

**W**hile doubts remain about the safety of, and need for, irradiated food, consumers continue to send the clear signal to food manufacturers and retailers that they don't like the technology and they won't buy food treated with irradiation. Supermarkets know that the market for irradiated food is almost non-existent.

Those in the food industry who want to irradiate food are trying to get the rules on irradiation labelling abolished, or to get the process re-named as 'electronic pasteurisation' (see FM52). One way consumers can ensure that these sneaky methods don't succeed is to call on supermarkets to publish their policies on food irradiation. Supermarkets know that if they let irradiated foods sneak onto their shelves, they would lose customers. After all, supermarkets sell more than two thirds of all food that is consumed in the UK.

The Food Irradiation Campaign asked the major supermarkets for their policies on irradiated food and asked how they check that their standards are being maintained.

This is what they told us:

### Marks & Spencer

**Does not stock irradiated products**

M&S says: 'The source and standard of all Marks & Spencer products and ingredients are specified to the manufacturer and are audited by Marks & Spencer technologists.'

### Asda

**Does not stock irradiated products**

Asda says it makes its policy clear to suppliers, and relies on suppliers to check their products. Asda said that it was influenced by customer views on irradiation, and this guided its policy.

### Somerfield

**Does not use any irradiated ingredients in Somerfield own-brand products**

Somerfield says it sends samples for laboratory testing and carries out surveys on 'high risk' own-label products, and has made suppliers aware of its policy.

### Co-operative group

**Does not use any irradiated ingredients in Co-op own-brand products**

The Co-op says its own-brand specifications prohibit the use of irradiated ingredients. The Co-op sends samples for laboratory testing and is committed to full labelling.

### Iceland

**Does not stock irradiated products**

Iceland says that all suppliers for Iceland own-label products go through a stringent approval and monitoring procedure.

### Safeway

**Does not stock irradiated products**

Safeway says that it sends samples for laboratory testing, and stated that it was in favour of labelling any irradiated products.

### Sainsbury's

**Does not stock irradiated products**

Sainsbury's says: 'We don't sell irradiated products – our customers don't want them.'

### Tesco

**Does not stock irradiated products**

Tesco says it does not stock irradiated foods in response to 'customer demand'.

### Waitrose

**Does not use irradiated ingredients in Waitrose own-brand products**

Waitrose says: 'Suppliers ensure that a suitable traceability system is in place to ensure that any Waitrose product is not irradiated.'

■ For details of the Food Irradiation Campaign, contact Merav Shub at the Food Commission on 020 7837 9229; email: irradiation@foodcomm.org.uk.

### Swedes challenge EU

In Sweden, consistent government action over 15 years has shown that pesticide use and residues can be cut significantly through a stringent regulatory system, government and industry targets, and cross-sectoral commitment to environmental and health improvements.

Sweden has launched a challenge to the EU chemicals policy by declaring it will use any means possible to block marketing on its territory of EU-approved pesticides that are currently banned under Swedish law.

■ Source: *Environment Daily*

### Patented chips

The development charity ActionAid has lodged a patent application for the ready-salted chip, as part of a campaign to draw attention to 'biopiracy' – the patenting of staple foods such as basmati rice, wheat and soya.

■ Visit: [www.actionaid.org.uk](http://www.actionaid.org.uk)

### Legal challenge

The government is to be challenged in court over its decision not to hold a full public inquiry into the outbreak and handling of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in a Judicial Review action backed by *The Ecologist* magazine. *The Ecologist* speculates

that the government's failure to act could be seen as a deliberate attempt to undermine family farms.

■ Source: *The Ecologist*

### Low-fat lorry drivers

Haulier Eddie Stobart has employed a nutritionist to tell his 1,200 drivers how to improve their diets and to stay away from unhealthy fry-ups after he discovered that his own cholesterol level was too high.

■ Source: *EHN News*

### Fizzing sausages

The Food Standards Agency has for the first time used its statutory powers to enter food premises to obtain

information and inspect company records, in relation to a recall of canned hot-dog sausage imported by Ye Olde Oak Foods Ltd. Products had been described as 'fizzing, exploding and foul smelling' on opening.

■ Source: *Food Standards Agency*

### Multiple residues

A report on the potential dangers of foods containing cocktails of pesticide residues has been released by the government's Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (known as CoT).

■ Details from Keith Butler, *Food Standards Agency*, 020 7276 8507.